

Story 2145 (1999 Tape 5)

Narrator: İsmail Çakmak, 39

Location: Pınarbaşı, kaza town
of Kayseri Province

Date: July 18, 1999

Treachery in Bargaining

A street peddler used to come to our village every Sunday. He would lay out all of his wares near the village fountain, and he would either sell his goods or exchange them for other objects. His bargaining fascinated the children, and they came to the fountain every Sunday to watch this business. He would try to trade a pack of chewing gum for a kilogram of cotton. Or he would try to exchange a pack of chewing gum for a basket of eggs. Or he might try to trade a pack of gum and a small string of beads for something more valuable.

Grandfather Hasan used to sit a short distance from the fountain and observe the efforts of this peddler to cheat his customers. The behavior of the peddler angered him, and he wanted the children to be aware of his dishonesty. One Sunday Grandfather Hasan said to the and girls, "Children, would you like to have me tell you a story?"

"Yes, please do, Grandfather Hasan," answered all of

Story 2145

the children.

The old man then began to tell his story. "In an earlier time an old wolf used to hang around the threshing floor¹ of our village. Every day he used to catch one or more sheep or goats and eat it. After this had been going on for awhile, the villagers demanded that something be done to protect their property.

"The village muhtar² therefore summoned the wolf to his office to discuss this matter. The muhtar asked the wolf, 'What must we do to prevent you from killing our flocks?'

"After they had discussed this matter for awhile, the wolf offered this bargain. He said, 'If you will deliver to me 1.5 kilograms of meat every day, I shall no longer harm any of your livestock.' The muhtar accepted

¹A threshing floor is a circular area, about 100 feet in diameter, covered with clean clay. When the clay has been pressed down and allowed to dry for a few days, it provides a suitable place for threshing grain.

²A muhtar is the headman of a village or other small community. Until the advent of television in the 1960s, he was probably the only elected official many villages ever saw. All other officials with whom they had contact were probably appointees of federal ministries.

Story 2145

this offer, and all of the residents agreed to take turns providing the daily 1.5 kilograms of meat.

"This arrangement went along very satisfactorily for awhile. One day, however, the villager whose turn it was to provide the meat balked at this idea. 'Why don't we let the wolf go without meat for a day or two?' He therefore did not deliver the promised meat to the wolf. Neither did the man whose turn it was to do so the following day.

"On the third day the wolf headed for the muhtar's office. On the way he passed the threshing floor, where he saw a sheep and a lamb. He said to himself, 'Let us say that the sheep weighs one kilogram and the lamb weighs 1/2 kilogram.'³ He was very hungry, and so he killed both of the animals and ate them. He then decided against visiting the muhtar. Instead, he returned to his den and slept comfortably.

"The villagers complained to the muhtar about what had happened. The muhtar summoned the wolf to his office and asked, 'Why did you do such a thing?'

"The wolf replied, 'I made an honest bargain with you,

³The respective weights of the two animals had to be much greater than estimated by the wolf.

Story 2145

and I was faithful to my part of that bargain. But some of your people were treacherous and dishonest about keeping the village's part of the bargain. One day no meat was delivered to me. Again on the second day no food was brought to me. On the third day I started to come to your office to discuss this matter, but I did not have strength enough to get there. I saw a sheep and a lamb near the threshing floor. I had no scales with me, but I estimated that the sheep weighed one kilogram and the lamb weighed $1/2$ a kilogram. I therefore killed and ate both of them, recovering only half of what was owed to me. I want no more dishonest bargains.

The children all applauded this story, but the peddler disliked it. He packed up his wares and sneaked away. He has never returned to our village since that time